The Associations of the Spirit

THE ASSOCIATIONS OF THE SPIRIT.

Acts 2:12 And they were all perplexed and amazed, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

Acts.2:16 This is that which hath been spoken thru the prophet Joel.

INTRO. The beginnings of the Xn Church of great interest.
How did the simple religion of Jesus become the world's greatest faith?
What cryztalized the little group of unorganized followers into the early Xn Church?
How come their faith spread so rapidly thru Palestine and Asia until it captured the whole Roman Empire?
What is the secret of that first enthusiasmand how can the Church of today recover it?
Many and varied explanations gave been given.
It cannot be found in in the early beliefs.
No highly developed system of belief.
"Repent and be baptized"
"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved"

The secret not found in its organization.
No developed institutional system. Not an organized Church such as we have today.

Nor do its services disclose the secret of its power. No perfected rits and sacraments and rituals such as are used today.

No better explanation can be given than that which Peter gave in his sermon at Pentacost:This is that which hath been spoken thru the prophet Joel, 'And it shall be in the last days, saith God,I will pour forth of my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prpphecy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.'"

It was a divine enthusiasm, the very Spirit of Christ himself, that took hold of those first followers and transformed them into an all-conquering power.
Jesus had promised this very thing.
Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.

The disciples themselves give the same explanation.
The gift of the Holy Ghost was the one indespensible experience of the Xn in apostolic days.
They chose Steven because he was full of the Holy Ghost.
When they sent out apostles, it was because the Holy Ghost had separated them for the work.
Whenever the disciples did any great work it was because the Holy Ghost was with them.
The disciples explanation to all inquiries was ever the same. All that they did was not don done by themselves, but by the Spirit of God within them.

I. The Holy Spirit to the early Xns was the radiant realization of God in their personal lives.

Their unscientific knowledge and understanding
God comes into our lives, not thru our intellectual searchings but thru our moral attitudes.
A person does'nt become our friend by our picking him to pieces but by our appreciating him and by surrendering to him in loyalty and love. Nor does God become a reality in our lives except thru appreciation, surrender and Love.
Three examples of recent experience.
The instructor in an agricultural college
"I never went to church much. But six months ago when I was alone in the house I read my Bible and got down down beside my bed and God came into my life. I've had such joy ever sinc And the strange part of it is that it stays. It is there when I awake in the morning. I try to tell poeple and they dont understand. But I know God has come into my life."
A cultured Chinese student here in America:
"I had been trying to help my people th best I could but I felt such a lack in my own soul. Now I am eager to get back to China to share the fulness of joy and love which have come to me."
A college professor with scientific tendency;
"I have given myself to Love. I have got self out of the picture and consequently I do not fear anything."

The religion of Jesus Christ was to the early believers, not a creed or a ritual or a church organization, but a personal experience, a life to be lived. It is only as our religion becomes thusn an inward experience, a source of personal power, a spiritual enthusiasm, does it become vital and helpful. Then Faith, Hope and Love become an inward flame that fires the whole soul with the life of God.

II. The first Xn recipients of the Holy Spirit were just common folk such as you and I.
No difference between them and us.

But they lived in a different age? The world was ripe for the advent of Xty?
Jewish hatred
Roman persecution and indifference and contempt
Greek skepticism

Do existing conditions explain the present apathy of the Church?
Prevailing materialism
Complexity of interests
Domination of physical sciences
Modern pleasures and unlawfulness

If the history of the early church tells us anything, it tells us that outward conditions have very little to do with the spiritual vitality of the Church. It is the inward condition of the Church itself that is the determining factor. All the organization and ritual ad creed in the world cannot take the place of the personal experience of the Spirit of God in one's soul.

The situation of the early Church was no different from our Church, so far as spiritual power is concerned.
Their members were just folk like we are.
Their conditions outwardsly the same.
The difference is to be found in the matter of personal experience, the experience of the Spirit.

Conclusion.

The early Xns prepared themselves to receive the Spirit. And we must do the same if we would have the pow pwer of the Spirit.
Their seeking after and tarrying in the upper room.
Their eagerness to take the Gospel to the unsaved
Their recognition of all as the children of God.